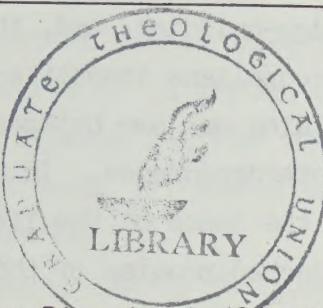


THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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NATIVE AMERICANSAFFIRM NEW DIRECTIONS

86228

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. (DPS, Oct. 23) -- The largest group of Episcopalians involved in Native American ministries ever gathered met here to produce a new Covenant to guide their work and launch a new network of clergy support.

Entitled "Oklahoma II," the weeklong event brought together 81 bishops, priests, deacons and laity -- including 50 Native Americans -- under the sponsorship of the National Committee on Indian Work and Coalition-14 for a vigorous scrutiny of their mission and ministry. The Covenant that emerged will be a major vehicle in developing the role of Native Americans in Church-wide leadership, cross-cultural understanding, education and serve as a tool in the continuing fight against racism.

The new coalition has already begun work with Church Center staff to enhance and support professional ministry among Native people.

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Summing up the tone of the gathering, Owanah Anderson, staff officer for Native American Ministries at the Episcopal Church Center said, "We came, many of us, burdened by old mistrusts...Our Primate laid before us an example of bridge-building, and, throughout the week, Native American and non-native Episcopalians identified issues, sought viable responses and set about building our own bridges across the chasm of mistrust to wholeness and interdependence. In my opinion, we each left Oklahoma prepared to 'learn the dance of the life cycle. Tomorrow dances behind the sun...in sacred promise of things to come for children not yet born...'"

The Conference drew representatives from 26 dioceses and involved not only the leadership of both the National Committee and C-14 but 13 bishops, representatives of Province VIII and Seabury-Western Seminary.

Planning for the meeting began early this year with a document from the 1984 "Oklahoma I" conference, which had called for a revitalized Native American ministry modeled on the C-14 structures of openness and sharing. A design team developed a series of questions dealing with church identity, ministry, leadership and theology, which potential participants were asked to share with members of their communities. The results of these grass-roots sessions were brought to this early-October meeting here.

Added to this mix were opening remarks by Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning in which he spoke not only of his role as a bridge but theirs: "I'm not the only bridge. We need to learn this from one another -- so ministry might truly be enabled. This affirms the importance not only of my being with you these hours, but more importantly, that you continue to listen to each other in order that the objectives of this gathering might become a reality and blessing for you as well as for the whole Church. My challenge to you is to ask how you engage yourself in the servant ministry of inclusiveness...how can you be more inclusive?"

One issue the Presiding Bishop raised was that of racism and its continuing presence in the Church. His promise to his hearers that he

would do more personally to address the issue and eliminate its effects was echoed in both the covenant and the document forming a new ministry association that emerged from the gathering.

The clergy caucus vowed to be, among other things, "a support and advocate for common concerns of injustice and racism" and the covenant, calling racism "a hideous reality" asserted that when "we face this ominous reality...the process of redressing the damage it causes will be grace-filled and powerful."

That statement sums up fairly the avowedly positive stand that the consultation seemed to produce as reflected by participants and their closing document. (Ed.s: Text attached.) Anderson, in talking about the feelings of the group and the results, said: "The strong point of this gathering was being able to contribute to their coming together, their network building. This is an assertion of strength, an affirmation of positiveness over against so much of the negativeness that pervades their every day lives."

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PICTURE CAPTION

Presiding Bishop and Navajo Children

(86228) -- Between the meeting of the House of Bishops and the convening of Oklahoma II, Presiding Bishop Edmond L. Browning spent some time on the Navajo reservation, celebrating in the Episcopal communities there. Here, he sits among Navajo children at a service of Eucharist, Baptism and Confirmation at Good Shepherd, Fort Defiance, Ariz.

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THE COVENANT OF OKLAHOMA II

We wish to characterize the spirit of our second meeting in Oklahoma City -- the one we now call "Oklahoma II" -- as one of hard, yet joyous work, in the context of renewal, expectation, and celebration.

For the first part of our meeting, our Presiding Bishop was with us, not only as a leader in the traditional sense, but equally as a listener. This, we are learning, is where all sensitivity and the collaboration from which it springs must begin. All parts of the Church must know, feel, and respond to pain in other parts of the Church.

The Presiding Bishop spoke of himself as being a bridge; and he calls us to be a bridge also. The bridge that we are challenged to be is one that, on one side compels us to articulate our needs, and recommendations for responding to those needs; and, on the other side, allows us to bring our unique gifts to the rest of the Church, and indeed, through her, to the world.

We find that relationships built upon mistrust, even when there has been ample historical justification for it, always foreordain separation; but, as trust grows, so also does hope, and with that hope, the opening of vast potential for reconciliation, healing, and wholeness.

We wish no longer to express our needs in negatively constructed terms, but rather in a positive context. Building upon this, we would like to tell the larger Church what we need, share some thoughts as to how these needs might best be met; and, in addition, even now say what we feel we have to offer the Church.

We fully recognize that racism is still a hideous reality in our midst, and we know that there will always be elements and remnants of this among us. But, we know also that when we acknowledge and face this ominous reality, and continue to engage it, the process of redressing the damage it causes will be grace-filled and powerful. We commend our Primate for the steps he is contemplating in the inclusion of our voice in addressing the issues of racism in the leadership of our Church on the national level. We expect our Church, not excluding the diocesan level, to keep the reality of racism before it, and continually work toward vanquishing it. We acknowledge prejudicial tensions within and among our communities, and we pledge ourselves to recognizing and going beyond these.

We recognize that the Church has an existing structure. This is a reality, and is not undesirable, per se. However, we feel these structures must be challenged vigilantly in order that they become and remain open and participatory. We therefore expect our Church, on the national and diocesan levels and in local communities, to look at all structures, including the administrative and financial, related to the work in, of, and by Indian and native peoples, and make certain that these are accessible and widely participatory, especially on the part of those affected by such ministries.

We recognize that the Church needs leadership. We, as Indian and native peoples, need a leadership emerging from, affirmed and supported by, and responsive to our communities. Leadership development needs to be enhanced in both lay and clerical areas. We therefore expect our Church to help us design clear, well-grounded curricula and processes, endorsed and backed by recognized authority, for the nurturing of leaders in, for, and within, our Indian and native communities.

We recognize that our common baptism into Christ obligates us to a ministry of evangelism and education, for the joy of the Gospel-way-of-life is spread by the handing down, sharing, and redefining of knowledge, in both informal and formal ways. Our educational needs are great, with respect to both children and adults. We therefore expect our Church to help us develop educational materials and ministries geared to our particular needs.

We recognize that we have an obligation to minister to and serve one another within our own communities, and we rededicate ourselves to this in a new way. We feel that our traditions already have a wonderful stream of generosity and sharing flowing through them. We hope that this tradition can be made a deeper part of our own Christian commitment. Further, we have seen the tragedy called "burn-out" in many of our finest and best leaders. We resolve to do our best to eradicate this plague from our midst, and bring forward models for well-being.

Much in our consultation has revolved around our particular Indian and native spirituality. We claim this spirituality as being deep and abiding. We seek the means more profoundly to proclaim this spirituality. And, we offer it to the whole Church for her renewal and refreshment. We no longer will ask for our voice to be heard -- this echoes paternalism. Rather, we will raise our common voice in full

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confidence that the Holy Spirit, the wind, the breath of God, will carry it forward.

We cannot, however, speak of spirituality in a vacuum. Spirituality thrives upon wholeness. The larger Church has resources of a kind that will aid and assist us, particularly as these relate to the devastating multitude of social problems we are facing regarding family life, health, substance abuse (such as alcoholism), and injustice. Above all, the most treasured and treasurable resource we have within our Church is its peoples, of all ages, including children, with all languages, cultures, and diversities. For this reason, we have celebrated with joy the presence of a native Hawaiian at our consultation. We recognize that our Church is not the only communion facing enormous social problems. We will work, in every way, on an ecumenical basis, in the direction of the resolution of these vital concerns.

Noting that a great part of the Church's witness is not to permit the avoidance of painful issues, we submit the following as actions needing to be taken. We count on the whole Church to participate in bringing them into reality.

1. The continued including and empowering of Indians and native peoples in the decision-making apparatus of the Church.
2. Exploration and experimentation with, in the very near future, alternative modes of Church governance and structure.
3. Consultation in all programs of the national Church designed to combat the evils of racism.
4. Assistance in the development of a variety of media especially designed to foster cross-cultural appreciation and understanding.
5. Assistance in the design of materials and programs for the training of indigenous Church leaders, both lay and ordained.
6. Assistance in the design of educational curricula for adults and children, addressing both Church and broadly social needs.
7. The exposure of the whole Church to native spirituality, and the encouraging of native communities to offer this spirituality to the whole Church.

It was Jesus' prayer that we all be one. We finish on a note similar to that upon which we began -- the word our Presiding Bishop left with us. He said he hoped he would hold up the unity of the Church as the primary vehicle of the Church's accomplishment of its mission.

We pray that native and non-native peoples alike may be called into the fullness and unity of Christ, and the grace of reconciliation, through the offering and sharing of their respective God-given gifts with one another.

Given at Oklahoma City October 10, 1986 by the participants of Oklahoma II in unanimous consent.

The Rt. Rev. Craig B. Anderson

The Rt. Rev. Robert Anderson

Mary Ellen Baker

George Baldwin

Norman Blue Coat

The Rev. Gary Cavender

The Rev. Steve Charleston

Lydia Conito

Virginia Doctor

The Rev. Thomas Doyle

Lorraine Edmo

Gaye Leia Ezzell

The Rev. Virgil Foote

The Rt. Rev. Wesley Frensdorff

The Rev. Hal Greenwood

The Rt. Rev. Harold Hopkins, Jr.

Thomas Jackson

The Rt. Rev. C.I. Jones

The Rt. Rev. Rustin Kimsey

Lloyd LeBeau

The Rev. Gerald Mason

Mary Ellen Meredith

The Rev. Edward F. Ostertag

Helen Peterson

Howard Anderson

Uberta Arthur

The Rev. Joe Bad Moccasin

The Rev. Henry Bird

The Ven. Noah Brokenleg

Paul Chalk

Blue Clark

John L. Danforth

The Rev. James H. Dolan

James Eckels

The Very Rev. Clyde Estes

The Rev. Andy Fairfield

Duane Fox, Sr.

The Rev. Canon Patrick

Genereux

The Ven. Robert Herlocker

The Rev. Barney Jackson

Rosella Jim

Gladys KassionasGard

Kealoha

Gordon Kitto

Monte Littlefield

The Rt. Rev. Gerald N.

McAllister

Alonzo Moss, Sr.

Donald Peter

Duane Pinkerton

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Elsie Pitka

The Rev. Ruth Potter

Mark Raymond

Marie Rogers

Dean Mark Sisk

Michael Taylor

Bessie Titus

Mary Jo Turgeon

Lillian Vallely

The Rt. Rev. William Wantland

The Rt. Rev. Roger J. White

The Rt. Rev. Steward Zabriskie

The Rev. Steven Plummer

Christine Prairie

The Rev. Canon Victor

Richer

Buford Rolin

Tim Tall Chief

Marilyn Teiken

The Rt. Rev. Richard

Trelease

The Rev. Gary Turner

Erma Vizenor

The Rt. Rev. James D.

Warner

Kathleen Williams

Blanche Zembower

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Owanah Anderson, Staff Officer, Native American Ministry

The Rev. Richard Chang, Administrative Deputy to the Presiding Bishop

The Rev. Richard Gary, C-14 Liaison

Carol Hampton, Field Officer, Native American Ministry

Barry Menuez, Senior Executive for Mission Operations

The Rev. Earl Neil, Executive for National Mission in Church and Society

Whitney Smith, Video and Audiovisuals Producer

OKLAHOMA II CONSULTATION - October 6-10, 1986

Jointly sponsored by the National Committee on Indian Work and Coalition-14

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BROWNING ATTENDS FARM,  
OIL CRISES CONFERENCE

by Stephen Weston

Diocese of Dallas

DPS 86229

IRVING, Texas -- (DPS, Oct. 23) -- Economists, oil executives, real estate developers and bishops from dioceses in Texas, Louisiana and Oklahoma assessed the economic impact of farm failure and oil boom/bust with the Most Rev. Edmond L. Browning here Oct. 10. The depressed economic climate and the Church's involvement in human suffering elicited expressions of desperation, cautious optimism and hope from the twenty persons who met with the Presiding Bishop at the Quality Inn.

As he sought perspective in the aftermath of a collapsed oil economy and depressed farm market, Browning said he was aware that many communicants of the Episcopal Church were directly affected, and that many others were indirectly woven into the pattern of foreclosure and misery. "I would like to hear your response to this growing concern and to have your advice and counsel on an appropriate national agenda and strategy," he told representatives of seven dioceses.

Jim Cochran, senior operations officer for Texas Commerce Bank Shares, Houston, began an economic appraisal of oil and gas markets by suggesting that, while the crisis was severe in Louisiana and less so in Texas, "the United States as a whole will continue to perform fairly well into 1987-1988." He said continued expansion buying, beginning with the Christmas season of 1982, had not run its course in Texas. Consumer spending for durable goods, which, according to Cochran, carries the U.S. economy, was up 20 per cent in 1986, especially in commodities such as boats, houses and home furnishings.

In oil and gas, large producers in all three states were currently experiencing a 12-month period of adjustment to \$13 a barrel for crude, resulting in a period of what Cochran called "human and corporate pain" as prices are scaled down. He said the economic situation would "get better gradually in 1987-1988, at a very low rate of creep," and suggested that it would take a dramatic structural event to "pop" oil prices above \$20 a barrel.

Not until such increase occurred, he said, would the oil market return to a healthy state. Conditions in the "oil patch," especially in the Midland-Odessa area, reflected in the overall state

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job growth rate in 1987, a 1.1 to 1.5 percentage increase. From 1976-1985, Texas grew 4 percent in the job market each year, with the national average at 2.3 percent.

In Oklahoma and Louisiana, where dependency on the oil and gas industry is more visible, job loss is alarming. State economies are facing complicated financial restructuring. In Oklahoma, the largest banking system has failed, and there is commercial over-building, with vacancy rates running as high as 20 per cent. "More houses are on the market," said Bishop Gerald N. McAllister, "and many people are walking away from loans they cannot afford to service. I don't think we have seen the bottom in any of the major sectors. A lot of people are going under. There comes a point when you decide, 'I can't hang on.' " He said he expected 12 more months of a downhill economic picture.

The Rev. Claude Paine, rector of St. Mark's Church, Houston and the personal representative of Bishop Maurice M. Benitez, said the depressed state of the Houston economy has encouraged an initiative begun by Benitez that addresses conditions surrounding unemployment. Paine described the program as a way of helping people respond to jobs available. "Tom Hall, a management consultant, helps people face the trauma, despair and disillusionment of being unemployed by showing how to make a resume and how to interview for a job." He said the approach was based on the importance of self-worth, countering the popular myth that "without the job, we are nobody." Seminars in four Houston locations have helped 150 people find new work so far. "The response to unemployment has lifted depression and given hope," Paine said. "People are looking up, hanging on. Mutual support groups are being developed."

Frank Holt, from the Diocese of Dallas, echoed the positive approach to deprivation by saying, "Bad news is often old news. There are a lot more people who are hurt, and many of my friends who have problems. I feel confident that as individuals we have bottomed out; but I also realize we have to survive with new trade, with cottage industries. There are so many unmet needs." Holt asked for continued support from the national church and said that new church growth might occur in this period of economic instability through increased volunteer recruitment and training for ministry.

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It was the opinion of several participants that with rapid, negative change, people are looking for a stabilizing force in the Church. However, the institution is also undergoing changes, which are often unsettling. McAllister said, "Symbolic action is needed from the national church office in depressed areas." He said agricultural hot lines have been established and resources made available in many places, thanks to the concern of Farm Aid and the efforts of entertainers like Willie Nelson. "Help," McAllister said, "has to be focused, galvanized and mobilized."

In the Diocese of West Texas, Bishop Coadjutor John H. MacNaughton said internal resources and a shared cultural and educational background help concentrate human assistance. "We have a hard problem in the Rio Grande Valley," he said. "Tens of thousands of Hispanics are coming across the Rio Grande." He referred to the Sanctuary Movement and asked, "What do we do in regard for the Christian conscience?" Emphasizing the necessity for positive response, he said, "If you 'gloom-and-doom' long enough, people are going to believe you. Attitude has a lot to do with it."

McNaughton suggested that at every level, the national church might deal with the Hispanic question in consultation with people on the scene, especially in the Rio Grande Valley. "Talk with us first," he said, emphasizing that solutions to pressing need are often found in the experience of front-line specialists.

Summarizing what he had heard, the Presiding Bishop said it was evident that people with imagination "are present in different areas of the Church's ministry, and that success stories in the face of human suffering must be shared. The principle," said Browning, "is to check out the assumptions and change the images people have."

McAllister responded: "The clergy," he said, "are dealing with these problems as not being all negative." He said that when the Church is content, "the bottom line looks good, and we don't see the pain. In the brokeness, pain and hurt, maybe this is the best of all times, when we open some eyes, see a lot of beautiful things happening and begin to do things right at hand."

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SOUTHERN AFRICA WOMEN  
TELL U.S. THEIR STORY

DPS 86230

NEW YORK (DPS, Oct. 23) -- Four women from South Africa and Namibia, part of a group of six currently on a speaking tour of the United States, recently held a press conference under the auspices of the National Council of Churches, sponsor of their tour, to discuss the situation in their countries and their reaction to this country.

For one of the women, Helena (Lindy) Kazombaue, a Roman Catholic from Namibia, this was her first trip outside of Africa; for another, Sally Motlana, Anglican from South Africa, it was the latest of several visits, but all of the women agreed in expressing gratitude to the tour organizers for the opportunity provided them, and all spoke of the importance of the interchange taking place: being able to tell their story of life under apartheid personally to the American people, receiving from them support, creating an understanding between peoples. And all urged that such speaking tours be continued, even while acknowledging them to be costly.

Motlana, with more than 30 years as an anti-apartheid activist stretching back to her student days, was called upon to speak first. She serves as vice-chairperson of the All Africa Council of Churches, is a life-time vice-president of the South African Council of Churches and is currently president of the Black Housewives League. She outlined the history of the most recent troubles in South Africa, speaking eloquently of violence occurring at mass funerals, saying "At every burial, two or three other people are killed. Our graves will never be closed because every day we must bury people. Oppression is every day. I don't have to read about it. I see it in my daily life. And who suffers most? The mothers..." She added, "The South African government says it is bringing reform; I have seen no change. Apartheid, being a heresy, cannot be reformed or changed. It must be abolished." Motlana closed her statement by saying, "We don't want violence. We want peace, but we want justice first. Without justice, there can be no peace."

Kazombaue, a social worker and president of the Namibian Women's Voice organization who described herself as "a housewife," spoke next, remarking on her surprise at the willingness of the American

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DPS 86230/2

people to listen. She expressed disappointment, however, at the general lack of recognition here of Namibia as a distinct entity. She stressed that while many of the problems of Namibia and South Africa are similar, Namibia is a separate country, currently being occupied by South Africa but striving for its independence. She encouraged Americans to mention Namibia by name when discussing the situation in southern Africa and to include it in sanctions. "Include Namibia," she said, "or South Africa will side-step sanctions by using Namibia."

Emma Mujoro, a Lutheran pastor from Namibia and vice-president of Namibian Women's Voice, also spoke briefly, as did Anglican Venita Meyer of South Africa, who currently serves as regional liaison officer for the Dependent's Conference of the South African Council of Churches. All the women then took questions from reporters.

Two other women who have been part of the lecture tour were unable to be present at the press conference: Namibian Flina Kazondunge, an Evangelical Lutheran social worker, and Sbongile Nene, an Anglican from South Africa who is a lecturer at the University of Zululand's Department of Sociology.

###

NEW ANGLICAN IMAGE SEEN AT

PEACE & JUSTICE CONFERENCE

by Richard Harries

Dean of Kings College, London

from the Church Times of London

DPS 86232

(Ed.s: Dean Harries is the author of a number of articles about the Anglican Peace and Justice Network, which has produced a working document which will be carried in The Episcopalian next month.)

LONDON (DPS, Oct. 23) -- I imagined Anglicanism in South America to be of that terribly dull Low Church kind: Evangelism with the fizz gone out, as flat as a bottle of soda-water with the top left off two days, ministering to genteel expatriate congregations clustered round our embassies. That stereotype was rapidly shown the front door by Luiz Prado, an Anglican priest working in the south of Brazil, with whom I recently spent a week in Jerusalem as part of the Anglican Peace and Justice network.

Luiz shocked us with his figures. Brazil is the eighth richest country in the world in terms of gross national product, yet has no fewer than thirty-five million destitute and virtually abandoned children. Brazil's economy has grown ten times during the last forty years, but the minimum wage, which was eighty-five dollars per month in 1941, has dropped to fifty-eight dollars today.

Luiz works in a slum parish and is totally committed to the poor who swarm there. One remark of his will always be with me. No intellectual slouch himself, having done research on Teilhard de Chardin in France, he said to me: "We do not need books. The riches and treasure of our theology is in our people."

He really believed in the people he was serving and their dignity; educating them, helping them to stand on their own feet so that they could better help one another in the local community and claim their fair share of the earth's resources. A passion and an authenticity came through his broken English that touched us all.

I did not even know that there was an Anglican Church in the Philippines. But there is, and the bishop of its northern diocese, Bob

DPS 86232/2

Longid, was with us. President Marcos was his godfather and had been an official witness at his wedding: but the bishop had spent his life fighting the President.

The troops of the New People's Army are in his diocese. He knows them and understands their cause. Deeply suspected by Government security forces, he takes his life in his hands when he goes outside. He watches the new regime with wary hope.

Anglicans appear to be as committed to the struggle for social justice as the Roman Catholics about whom we read so much. That was the first healthy shock. The second concerned the repository of wisdom. We tend to pride ourselves in the Church of England that, though we may not be very heroic or saintly, we are at least "sound"; or judgements are balanced; we are mature.

But in Jerusalem it was above all the African bishops who seemed to bring the charism of wisdom to our group: Jonathan Onyemelukwe, the Bishop of the Niger, and Peter Hatendi, a bishop from Zimbabwe. Their sagacity, balance and fairness, their maturity and fore-sightedness were the very model of episcopal guardianship.

The week brought home to us how many terrible conflicts there are in the world today, but also how involved Anglicans are in the work of reconciliation.

Bishop Andrew Mumarge explained to us the background of the wretched killings in Sri Lanka between Tamils and Singhales. Bishop Charles Albertyn brought us up-to-date on South Africa, as did others for Kenya and Tanzania. Lest those from Britain felt superior, David Bleakley kept the reality of Ireland before us. We understood something of the work going on for Maoris in New Zealand and for Aborigines in Australia, and of the struggle to prevent Pacific Island peoples' suffering from nuclear testing.

We heard from Wales and Scotland and Canada, all with their problems. Above all, being in Jerusalem, we could not forget the plight of the Palestinians, who feel let down and forgotten by their fellow-Christians in other parts of the world. There is the double wickedness, in their eyes, of a Europe that killed the Jews and then forced the Palestinians to suffer for our guilt.

The whole world cheers, they said, when Scharansky leaves his home in Russia to come and live in Israel. "But we who have lived in the city for 1,000 years, and fly a banner in the Holy Sepulchre to prove it, have had difficulty in bringing our son to his home."

Then there is the Episcopal Church in the USA, about which the Church of England sometimes feels superior. "Oh yes, they are generous, but they are so rich they can afford to be."

Nothing could be further from the truth. The Episcopal Church has got its act together in a way that might put us to shame. Their generosity (and their are generous) is an expression of their commitment to the job in hand, as is their efficient organization and business-like way of doing things.

The Anglican Peace and Justice Network exists to keep those who are working in this field in touch with what is happening and to help prepare some of the ground for the Lambeth Conference of 1988. I came away with an overwhelming sense that the Anglican Church has some very good people doing an excellent job in crucial, sometimes dangerous, situations. If this is a measure of Anglicanism today, it is in good heart and bodes well for Lambeth.

###



DIOCESAN PRESS SERVICE/ Episcopal Church Center 212/867-8400

**CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 1986**

**The Most Rev. Edmond L. Browning**  
**Presiding Bishop**

DPS 86233

"Glory to God in highest heaven and on earth his peace for men on whom his favor rests." (Luke 2:14 NEB)

The greatest of all Christmas hymns are those that are found in the Bible. I love them because they are such wonderful songs of praise and because we use them liturgically all year long. This helps me recall the importance of the Incarnation of our blessed Lord whatever the church season may be. I also love them because of their message of peace and justice.

The biblical hymns about Jesus and his birth are, of course, the song of the angels (Luke 2:14), the Song of Mary (Luke 1:46-55), the Song of Zechariah (Luke 1:68-79), and the Song of Simeon (Luke 2:25-32). As with the biblical account of Jesus' birth, people throughout the ages have turned to song and poetry to express the wonder of the mystery of the Incarnation. Is there any question that we have so many hymns for this great feast?

The significant thing for me is that the songs of the angels, Mary, Zechariah and Simeon are not cozy ditties about the birth of a baby. They are great hymns of the coming of peace and justice. "On earth his peace for men on whom his favor rests," proclaim the angels. Mary sings: "He...has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things." Zechariah sings about the coming Messiah at the birth of John the Baptist: "the dawn from on high shall break upon us, To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace." And, the aged Simeon says: "Lord, you now have set your servant free to go in peace as you have promised." The proclamation of the biblical witness of the birth of Jesus was one of the new age of peace and justice.

Someone has said that peace is not the absence of war but the presence of justice. At Christmas, we welcome and proclaim the birth of the Prince of Peace. We know that the good news that Jesus preached was one of justice, of love, of compassion, of forgiveness.

It is peace for which I pray this Christmas. It will be in my songs, I know yours, as we praise and worship God as did the angels on that midnight clear:

For lo! the days are hastening on, by prophets seen of old,  
when with the ever-circling years shall come the time  
foretold,  
when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors  
fling,  
and all the world give back the song which now the angels  
sing.

(Hymn 89. Hymnal 1982)

###

DIOCESAN PRESS SERVICE/ Episcopal Church Center 212/867-8400

**PICTURE CAPTION:**

**Final Touches on Ecuador Cathedral**

DPS 86234

(86234) Just one day before its consecration, the altar still stands outside and workmen clamber over the structure of the new Ecuadorean Episcopal Cathedral in Quito. The next day, with the altar in its proper place, Connecticut Bishop Arthur Walmsley and Ecuadorean Bishop Adrian Caceres consecrated the Cathedral in the presence of a full congregation that included 18 Nutmeggers. The Cathedral -- and other Churches -- have been built with the help of Connecticut Venture Funds as part of a longstanding relationship that both dioceses have found fruitful. (Ed.s: see DPS 86225 of Oct. 16.)

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